

University of East London Institutional Repository: <http://roar.uel.ac.uk>

This paper is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please scroll down to view the document itself. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our policy information available from the repository home page for further information.

**Author(s):** Schneider, Arnd

**Article title:** Rooting Hybridity: Globalisation and the Challenges of mestizaje and crisol de razas for Contemporary Artists in Ecuador and Argentina

**Year of publication:** 2004

**Citation:** Schneider, A. (2004) 'Rooting Hybridity: Globalisation and the Challenges of *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas* for Contemporary Artists in Ecuador and Argentina' Indiana 21, 95-112

Arnd Schneider\*

## Rooting Hybridity: Globalisation and the Challenges of *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas* for Contemporary Artists in Ecuador and Argentina\*\*

**Resumen:** Las obras de varios artistas contemporáneos de la Argentina y del Ecuador están relacionadas, en parte, a la cuestión de la apropiación de culturas indígenas en un mundo globalizado. Construcciones de identidad en movimiento y reformulaciones ideológicas de identidades nacionales en términos de ‘mezcla’ y ‘homogeneidad’ en América Latina proporcionan el marco de referencia dentro del cual deben analizarse las obras de los artistas que realizan apropiaciones de culturas indígenas. Sugiere este artículo que la apropiación forma parte de procesos generales de la comprensión del *otro*, y que en última instancia está ligada a la construcción de identidades nuevas; intenta indicar las diferencias en los enfoque artísticos de la apropiación de lo indígena, así como de las ideologías nacionales del *mestizaje* y del *crisol de razas*.

**Summary:** The work of some contemporary artists from Argentina and Ecuador is, in part, related to the issue of appropriation of indigenous cultures in a globalised world. Shifting identity constructions and ideological reformulations of national identities in the sense of ‘mixture’ and ‘homogeneity’ in Latin America provide the frame of reference, within which the works of artists making appropriations from indigenous cultures has to be analysed. The article suggests that appropriation is part of a general process of understanding the Other, and ultimately linked to the construction of new identities; it tries to point out the differences in artistic approaches to the appropriation of the indigenous, as well as to the national ideologies of *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas*.

---

\* Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of East London, U.K., specialises in the anthropology of contemporary art, visual anthropology and the study of transnational migrations and ethnic identities, with special reference to Latin America and the Mediterranean. He has done extensive fieldwork in Argentina and in Sicily, and also research in Mexico, Uruguay and Ecuador.

\*\* I am grateful to Mona Suhrbier for comments on an earlier draft, as well as for anonymous review by INDIANA. Fieldwork in Ecuador was supported by a research grant from the University of East London in 1998, and in Argentina by a Senior Research Fellowship (*Habilitationsstipendium*) from the German Research Council (DFG), 1999-2002.

I am also grateful to Mari-Carmen Ramírez for generously facilitating access to the files of the Archer Huntington Gallery, when I was invited Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, in 1994.

## Introduction

A common-place perception divides Latin America into areas with a substantial indigenous presence (for example, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia) and those with a significant European presence (and much less prominent indigenous presence) such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile. Amongst cultural elites too, these stereotypes are further replicated, not least because of the indigenist ideologies on the one hand, and notions of a European melting pot on the other. For instance, an Ecuadorian painter spoke emphatically to me about the common 'Andean identity' of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, and contrasted this sharply with the European outlook of the *porteño* who only recently had started to travel to the Andes, and developed an interest in indigenous cultures.

Yet both stereotypes have to be treated as social constructions, products of their particular societies, carrying essentialising and homogenising notions which exclude others – as has been emphasised in much of the recent writings on multiculturalism (Sieder 2002), the legal and conceptual space for indigenous people (Blum 2001; Stavenhagen 2002), *mestizaje* (de la Cadena 2000; Gruzinski 2002), and the nation state (Quijada/Bernand/Schneider 2000) in Latin America. One of the most widely observed phenomena of the last 20 years has been the rise of indigenous movements. Especially, after the return to democracy in many Latin American countries, identity claims increasingly have been expressed in the idiom of ethnicity rather than class, in order get access to economic and political resources.<sup>1</sup>

This larger context of shifting identity constructions and reformulations of national identities (*mestizaje* and *crisol de razas*) in Latin America provides the frame of reference, within which to analyse artists making appropriations from indigenous cultures. For anthropology, a consideration of these artists is important for number of reasons. On the one hand, these artistic practices constitute new discourses about Latin American identity in reaction to old and new ideologies of 'mixture' and 'homogeneity'. Secondly, through their appropriating practices, artists inevitably, and sometimes deliberately, encroach upon anthropological discourses on the representation of others and, as we shall see, occasionally even actually collaborate with professional anthropologists and archaeologists. This implies, as I have argued elsewhere, that on an epistemological level the appropriation of indigenous cultures, both by western and non-western artists, potentially challenges the anthropological prerogative of representing others (Schneider 1993, 1996, 2000a, 2003b). Thirdly, many of the artists under consideration occupy a specific role in the process of globalisation, by occupying nodal points of exit and entry, in the appropriation, creation and diffusion of images of the

---

1 Cf. Albó (1991; 2002); Bengoa (2000); Blum (2001); Brysk (2000); Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999); Sieder (2002); Stavenhagen (2002); Urban/Sherzer (1991), Van Cott (2002).

indigenous, from local, national to international or global levels (Hannerz 1992; 1996; Schneider 1999).

Thus here the emphasis is on individual artists as interpreters and promoters of national ideologies, rather than groups bounded by ethnic, indigenous, or class categories.

This paper then is intended as a first step towards a comparative framework for analysing artistic appropriations of indigenous cultures in the light of *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas* ideologies. I have chosen two countries, Ecuador and Argentina, which are respectively paradigmatic for *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas* ideologies. We will also see that both ideologies, despite the obvious differences in terms of content, share common structural features, namely that they aim to produce homogenous national identities. I shall first turn to Ecuador, to show with two examples what challenges artists face working with and against the notion of *mestizaje*. I shall then discuss Argentina, which seemingly lies at the opposite end of the perceived spectrum of more or less 'indigenous' societies, and analyse artistic reactions to its own totalising ideology of homogeneity (the *crisol de razas*).

### **Ecuador: Constructions and Deconstructions of *Mestizaje***

In discussing Ecuador, first we have to consider the pervasive discourse of *mestizaje*<sup>2</sup> which carries both homogenising and particularistic connotations. In contemporary Ecuador the notion of *mestizaje* recognises the original existence of different ethnic groups, but principally constructs the nation as an admixture of these groups. *Mestizaje* constitutes a discourse about sameness resulting from difference, but without recognising difference of discreet ethnicities in the present or attributing the same importance to all ethnic groups. More recently, with various indigenous 'uprisings' (in 1990 and 2000; Brysk 2000), Ecuador, as other Latin American countries, has seen a "shift to a broader ethnic agenda" (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999: 5), where – as I have outlined in the introduction – claims for economic resources and demands for political participation are expressed in terms of ethnic categories, and not those of class or social stratification. Despite this, indigenous people and Ecuadorians of African descent remain at the margins of society.

As Radcliffe/Westwood highlight in their study on national identity in Ecuador,

In the language of "racial democracy" and *mestizaje*, hybridity is the norm and exclusive ethnicities are archaic (Radcliffe/Westwood 1996: 31).

So whilst *mestizaje* acknowledges difference in the past or as a point of departure, it arrives at a homogenous ideal of composites in the present. The homogenising dis-

---

2 Referring to the intermingling of Indian, Spanish and African peoples and cultures since the conquest (Williamson 1992: 152).

course of *mestizaje* is then opposed to particularistic notions of ethnic groups and sub-cultures. In an extreme version, *mestizaje* would claim all members of the nation state to be mestizos, with no room for other specific identities (Stutzman 1981; Appelbaum/Macpherson/Roseblatt [eds.] 2003; Wade 2003).

It is in the context of *mestizaje* that I wish to consider the work of Oswaldo Viteri, one of Ecuador's foremost living artists (Ades 1989: 289; Oña 1996: 187). His work crosses boundaries between art and anthropology, and appropriates and references indigenous and popular cultures. Viteri studied architecture, and in 1959 was an assistant to Oswaldo Guyasamín who, together with Eduardo Kingman, was one of the main representatives of the indigenist movement in modern Ecuadorian art. In 1961, Viteri trained as an anthropologist with Paulo de Carvalho-Neto (a Brazilian anthropologist and cultural attaché to the Brazilian embassy in Quito), and developed an increasing interest in the study of Ecuadorian popular culture. In order to document and survey Ecuadorian popular arts, Carvalho-Neto formed a research team which included Oswaldo Viteri, Victoria Carrasco (an artist now working in textiles and enamels) as well as others. The published result contained a large number of drawings by the artists (Carvalho-Neto 1989).

In 1969/70, after a period of both abstract and realist drawing and painting, Viteri started to incorporate little dolls into his paintings made from rags by folk artisans in Quito's Plaza Santo Domingo, creating the assemblages which would become his later trademark. He then commissioned one woman artisan to make these dolls for him in large quantities. For the next ten years, Viteri produced a large number of such *ensembles*, and with titles often referring to indigenous topics, the Andes, Pre-Columbian cultures (such as the Inca), the conquest, and to *mestizaje*.

In our interview in 1998, Viteri defended the notion of *mestizaje*. In his works the dolls represent the Andean and *mestizo* element of Ecuadorian culture, and brocade, for instance, stands for European influences (and specifically, the opulence of the Catholic Church).

For many years, I have been stressing the importance of *mestizo* culture in the Americas. I am a fervent defender of *mestizo* culture. I believe in *mestizaje*, which I think is the only way forward for the Americas and all they represent. I understand that *mestizaje* occurs on all levels, *mestizaje* of blood as well as *mestizaje* of culture. It is a complete thing and irreversible. The issue of *mestizaje* is getting more pronounced for obvious reasons. The world changes, barriers and frontiers are broken, people mix and exchange their cultures, their cultural heritage, their ideas, and their races (*razas*). This will produce an ever increasing syncretism (Oswaldo Viteri, interview, 1998).<sup>3</sup>

---

3 All translations of interviews are mine.

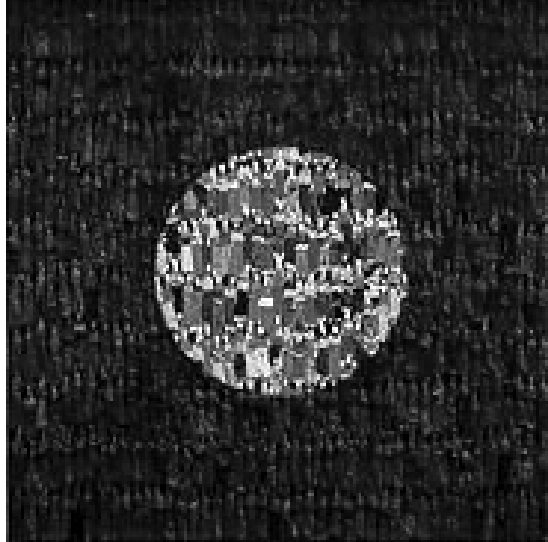


Fig. 1: Osvaldo Viteri, *Ojo de Luz* (*Eye of Light*) (1987).

However, in this statement it also becomes clear that, whilst Viteri starts from the notion of *mestizaje* as an idea of mixture or fusion, he also sees *mestizaje* as a liberating, and eventually inevitable process, which - through globalisation – will affect everybody. There is no room for strictly particularistic identities here. However, in Viteri's vision, the 'true' cultural mestizo can still make reference to several traditions at a time, and is the bearer of all them, without exclusively belonging to any one of them.

By contrast, José Luis Celi, a younger contemporary Ecuadorian artist, critically challenges the dominant paradigm of *mestizaje*, by investigating the politics of mainstream representation of indigenous groups and Afro-Ecuadorians.

This installation is made of *papier mâché* and newspapers, which were specifically selected to include articles on the economy and political situation in Ecuador. The artwork appropriates indigenous culture 'retrospectively', through a photograph taken in 1902 of a marriage ceremony of Indians in Saraguro, in the southern Ecuadorian province of Loja.<sup>4</sup> Celi did not investigate the circumstances in which the photo was taken, nor do we know anything about the photographer. In our conversations, Celi emphasised that this work is about the absence and silence on Indians in metropolitan urban, *mestizo* culture. He argues that in the context of urban *mestizo* culture (that is in Quito, Cuenca, and Guayaquil) Indians are not visible in mainstream society, if only in marginal activities as beggars, or as exoticised and folklorised traders.

---

4 On the contemporary indigenous people of Saraguro, Sarango Macas (1995).



**Fig. 2:** Luis Celi, *Lazos de sangre en el país del olvido*  
(Blood Ties in the Country of Oblivion, installation, 1996).

Despite the microphones positioned in front of the collage, there is no communication between the indigenous people and the viewer. The installation leaves us alone with its inquisitive urgency. The indigenous people are silently looking at us, yet the image is based on one of urban *mestizo* society's representations of Indians.

Celi's other work has Afro-Ecuadorians as its subject, which for reasons of space I cannot discuss in full detail here, but which sheds further light on the centralizing notion of *mestizaje*, and the exclusion or marginalisation of other, non-*mestizo* traditions in Ecuadorian society. Examples include the 1998 installation *Vencedor condenado a la derrota por agotamiento sucesivo* (Winner condemned to defeat by successive exhaustion) about a black Ecuadorian boxer, and a series of realist portraits of Afro-Ecuadorians. Celi, of European descent, is part of that dominant sector of society which defines itself as *mestizo*. Celi is aware of the politics of representation, the appropriation of 'black' culture by a 'white' (*mestizo*) artist, as well as the implicit differences in class and status between him and his subjects, as expressed in our conversations:

In Ecuador there is a discourse of "multinationality" and "multiculturalism". The people accept that racism does not exist. We try to have a much more relaxed and supportive attitude towards the native peoples and we feel proud of them. But there is a conflict, because there are [almost] no blacks and no Indians in the city – those Indians which do emigrate to

the city experience a tremendous crisis when they arrive. It is for economic reasons that we are confronting each other. [...]

Thus to speak of racism is a taboo topic, and at the same time it is a real problem. We are *mestizos*, and we have a bad predisposition. Sometimes, when we refer to the Indians, people say very unpleasant things and this happens because we coexist with the Indians, despite the fact that we are partly Indian ourselves. When we talk to Spaniards we reject the Indian part and when we talk to Indians we reject the Spanish part. As *mestizos* it seems that at times we lose our identity, because we do not know who we are.

A friend of mine [...] once put a rather compromising question to me: Why do I speak for them and try to take a position vindicating their problems? But because the problem is not only theirs, but a collective cultural and social issue, as a white person I do not want to exclude myself from the problem (José Luis Celi, interview, 1998).

It is evident from this interview that Celi takes a complex view of *mestizaje*. He clearly confesses that everybody in Ecuador is of mixed descent, including himself. This view is in accordance with the mainstream of urban elites. At the same time, he acknowledges the marginalisation of those who are categorised as Indians and Blacks. Crucially, he raises the issue of representation, that is the 'right' to speak for others – here exemplified with his own artistic representations of indigenous and black Ecuadorians.

Celi's criticism of the dominant ideology of *mestizaje* can be found among younger, critical intellectuals in Ecuador, whereas Viteri represents more the mainstream of Ecuador's established cultural elite.

### **Argentina: reinventing the indigenous Other**

The denial of an indigenous past and present in Southern Cone countries such as Argentina, and Uruguay (but also Chile) seems to contrast sharply with the modernist projects of *indigenismo* in Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador. For instance, in Mexico, with its strong genealogy of indigenist discourses, artists find themselves in an apparently legitimate tradition, which itself becomes hegemonic and exclusive, of representing indigenous cultures (Knight 1990; Lomnitz-Adler 1992; Kaplan 1993:120; Gutiérrez 1999). By contrast, and as I shall demonstrate with my examples, to work with anthropological appropriation in the Cono Sur countries involves a deliberate choice of breaking with tradition, rather than conforming to the established parameters of a hegemonic 20<sup>th</sup> century canon.

However, lack of *indigenismo* does not mean that there was no discourse on the indigenous in the Southern Cone countries. As Quijada/Bernand/Schneider (2000) and Quijada (2002) have shown for Argentina, the varying degrees of inclusion and exclusion applied to Indians after the Desert Campaign of the 1870s, were intrinsically linked to how governing elites conceived of the nation state. The *Campaña del Desierto* of the Argentine army concluded several centuries of partly friendly, partly



hostile relations between Indians and white, predominantly Spanish, settlers in the pampas. The Argentine state, wanting to exploit the pampas' fertile soil for crop production and cattle breeding, moved the settler frontier southwards. The Mapuche, who since the 18th century had crossed from today's Chile into Argentina, were partly exterminated, and the remainder pushed into marginal lands and reservations in Patagonia. The Argentine elites then considered three options: annihilation, settlement in reservations, and assimilation to the nation-state. Whilst the last option found most favour in public opinion, de facto the Desert Campaign resulted in a combination of the first two, with small remnants of indigenous populations surviving in today's Argentina (Quijada 2000: 69).

It is my contention that it was the denial of present and past indigenous cultures in the nationalist ideologies of Southern Cone states (with the exception of Paraguay) which motivated artists to appropriate and re-interpret manifestations of the indigenous 'other'. Thus in the 1960s the renowned Argentine abstract painters César Paternosto and Alejandro Puente (Paternosto 1989; 1996), when starting to occupy themselves with indigenous cultures, rebelled against established canons of their national academic traditions, and the dominant international art forms they were practising at the time (that is, abstract and concept art). This breaking with national and personal traditions occurred usually at the middle of an already established career. As we shall see below, the starting point for new appropriative practices consisted often in a journey to visit the remains of pre-Columbian cultures and/or contemporary indigenous communities.

Here I shall discuss two Argentine artists: Alfredo Portillos and Ximena Eliçabe.<sup>5</sup> Whilst different in their artistic production they share certain characteristics. As the majority of Argentines living in the coastal provinces, both are descendants of European immigrants to Argentina, and started their artistic careers by studying art at an academy. Alfredo Portillos, following Lynn Cooke's terminology, can be called a representative of 'hard primitivism'<sup>6</sup> Originally from Buenos Aires, Portillos first studied art at Tucumán University and then taught Industrial Design at La Rioja.<sup>7</sup> Since 1960 he has lived periodically with Indian communities in Argentina's north-east and north west (among them Mataco, Toba, Quechua and Aymara); and in 1962 he went to

---

5 I analysed the work of Uruguayans Rimer Cardillo, Nelbia Romero, Gustavo Fernández and Carlos Capelán in Schneider (2000a).

6 According to Cooke (1991: 141-142), in the "... 'hard' version of primitivism the societal practices rather than the material artefacts of tribal and prehistoric societies – rite, ritual, and shamanic ceremony – became pre-eminent". In 'soft primitivism', by contrast, there is a stronger focus on visual appearance and formal aspects.

7 Tucumán and La Rioja: capitals of the homonymous provinces in north-western Argentina.

tour the ‘Road of the Inca’<sup>8</sup> with a group of anthropologists. In a 1975 series of drawings and mixed media collages, entitled “Pucará de Tilcara” (referring to the region of Tilcara in the province of Jujuy), the artist arranged “European” and “Latin American” design patterns around a shrine of popular devotion in Tilcara.

Portillos is particularly interested in popular religion and magic. During his stay in Brazil (from 1976 to 1978), he took part in Candomblé rituals (interview, 1993). This inspired him to produce the mixed media collage series “Serie del Vudú” (1977), which confronts the spectator with syncretic, pseudo-magic objects, especially Catholic symbols (such as the cross and saints’ images) which are combined with a needle-pierced doll figure, turning its spell against the conquerors.

Frequently, Portillos’ art also involves performances of religious ceremonies and rites, as in *Espacio Ecuménico* ([1977] 1998), and *La Patagonia, Ngillatun* (2000).<sup>9</sup> Portillos has returned to the theme of the European conquest of America, with a series of mixed media objects on a Spanish conquistador,<sup>10</sup> and a second series, entitled “Ekeku” (1993).

A large retrospective of his work<sup>11</sup> at the Fundación Andreani in 2000 opened with a piece, which included a memento from the immigrant past of his Spanish (Galician) parents, an ornamental brass frame with three photographs, one showing his father, another where Portillos is seen as a baby, and a third, depicting him as a young man.

In contrast with Puente’s and Paternosto’s interest in abstract and geometrical art, Portillo highlights the Baroque as a category with genuine Latin American connotations of mixture and hybridity which can be applied both to pre-Columbian and contemporary popular or folk art (Herrera 1993; on the Baroque, see Serge Gruzinski 1991: 67; 2000; 2001; 2002).

### Global artists

A younger generation of Argentine artists inspired by indigenous issues operates increasingly on a global scale and uses also the internet to disseminate their images to a wider, international public. The world wide web, of course, creates the illusion of contemporaneity, geographically and culturally, of distant others – a phenomenon which has been pointed out many times over as a characteristic of post-modernity, or what Harvey (1989) called ‘time-space compression’.

8 Portillos (1976), not referring to a specific Inca road, but possibly meaning one of the *qapaq ñan* or *caminos reales* which linked the Inca Empire.

9 The Argentine art critic Glusberg (1976) described a performance by the Portillos brothers in 1976, entitled ‘masks and object’, which eclectically mixes elements from different cultures.

10 Full title of the series: *Cacique Saquesaxigua muerto por el Capitan Ximenes de Quesada por no revelar el lugar de El Dorado, 1538* (1990).

11 See also Portillos (2000).



**Fig. 3:** Alfredo Portillos, *Altar latinoamericano* (2000).

For instance, Ximena Eliçabe, a multi-media artist (working with textiles, feather, video, and computers) feeds images of Argentine indigenous communities and her own works into the internet, and in this way makes indigenous subjects available to a world-wide audience, albeit dispersed and heterogeneous. Eliçabe studied with the aforementioned Alfredo Portillos who teaches at the National Art School Pridiliano Pueyrredón. She also worked as a teaching assistant with César Sondereguer, one of the main proponents of an 'Amerindian Aesthetics' (Sondereguer 1997), in his classes of Pre-Columbian Design at the Architecture Faculty of Buenos Aires University. Since then she has been exploring more independent ways of engaging with

indigenous influences, and has drawn her inspirations from a variety of sources. She has visited indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico, and in 1996 went to Havana, Cuba, for a workshop on indigenous feather craft with Swiss resident Bolivian artist Alejandra Bravo.<sup>12</sup> Based on this experience, she created the costumes and performance of *Mantos chamánicos* (Shamanic Coats) in 1996.



**Fig. 4:** Ximena Eliçabe, *Mantos chamánicos* (1996).

Two female dancers are dressed in colourful feather costumes, which Eliçabe assembled using the techniques she had learned from Alejandra Bravo in the Havana workshop. The choice of colours makes general allusions to the feather art of the Indians of the South American lowlands. However, as Eliçabe pointed out in our interview, hers is a work of *synthesis*, not inspired by a particular culture. The choice was more determined by the two characters the costumes had to present, one relating to the spiritual world of the sky and the other to the underworld (represented on their painted faces, by a white and a black eye respectively), rather than by specific ethnographic references. Eliçabe's approach is further evidence that artists mainly follow a synthetic

---

12 See her book on the feather arts of the Amazon (Bravo 1999).

approach, assimilating from many different sources, and are not primarily occupied with singular ethnographic detail.

Eliçabe also has been involved in creating a web site, documenting folk and indigenous crafts of Argentina's interior provinces, such as Catamarca and Jujuy. Research for the websites and their creation is supported by the *Consejo Federal de Inversiones* (CFI), a federal agency which promotes investment in the provinces. The projects by Ximena Eliçabe and her business partner Germán Trench aim to promote, as they put it, 'our autochthonous heritage' (*lo nuestro, lo autóctono*), by sponsoring local artists and artisans, and documenting their work on websites and making them available to the public. Their conception of an 'autochthonous' heritage common to 'all' Argentines (even if they are of European descent as the majority of Argentines) bears similarity with the notion of *mestizaje* in Ecuador which appropriates all indigenous cultures for a common *mestizo* identity. However, Eliçabe and Trench's work does not just consist in transferring images of indigenous art and crafts to the web, but also making computer technology available in the provinces, helping local museums, and organising art and crafts fairs.

Eliçabe's art is informed by global locations, experiences and practices. She embodies the example of a 'global' artist, working from her base in Argentina, co-operating with local artists and theoreticians, adopting a variety of technologies of appropriation (travel, collecting, performance), engaging in multi-sited work, and disseminating local work on a global scale – and somehow promoting an epidemiology of local knowledge which gets transformed in the process.

## Conclusion

In the first section of this paper we have seen how, in the case of the Ecuadorian artists, appropriative choices grew out of a re-working of the concept of *mestizaje*, both enhancing it (in the case of Viteri) and criticising it (in the case of Celi).

I have also shown how the anthropologically informed work of Argentine artists signifies a rupture with the nationalist projects in their countries which did not allocate a legitimate space to indigenous peoples. However, it is important to note that, given large-scale European immigration, *European* immigrant identities did not provide a significant input to Argentine nationalism either (as the elite tried to 'argentinise' the population of various immigrant origins). Only very recently has the concept of *pluralismo cultural* (or multiculturalism) entered the Argentine debate (Schneider 2000b) – and artist Alfredo Portillos' reference to his Galician immigrant descent is a case in point (see above).

It is also crucial to stress that new constructions of identity advanced by Argentine artists, which emphasise *lo nuestro, lo autóctono* by appropriating indigenous culture from the white point of view are not dissimilar, in structural terms, to discourses of artists proposing *mestizaje* in Ecuador. In both cases indigenous cultures are appropri-

ated wholesale into a seemingly all-encompassing national identity, where their cultural heritage can be claimed also by those who do not define themselves as indigenous. In the process, however, because of the synthetic way the artists under review here approach their subject, indigenous cultures do not necessarily display their distinct specificities but appear at a more generic level, as we have seen with Viteri's and Eliçabe's work. Moreover, with the work of Ximena Eliçabe artists are now entering global discourses of appropriation and diffusion of their work.

The appropriation of indigenous and popular forms then can be interpreted as a reaction to a perceived loss of a 'stable' identity in a situation, where globalisation and marginalisation of indigenous and other particular(istic) traditions have challenged and de-centred the notion of a fixed cultural core (represented by the *crisol de razas* in Argentina and Uruguay, or by *mestizaje* in Ecuador). In some instances, especially in the Southern Cone countries, the endeavour to assume new identities also involves the construction of appropriate 'genealogies', claiming or reclaiming a special relation to an indigenous or autochthonous past or present. In more general sense, such appropriative strategies are further evidence of the creolisation of identities, a 'making native' by people who do not originally descend from indigenous populations. In this sense of cultural construction, as I have pointed out elsewhere at some length (Schneider 1998), contemporary Argentines, including the artists featured in this article, become Creoles or *criollos*, a term originally reserved for descendants of colonial Spaniards.

It is also useful to reflect upon the following questions at this point. What notion of the indigenous is reflected in the appropriative strategies of these artists? What do they mean by 'Latin American identity', and is not their concept of the indigenous again directed at the typical, the reified and the exotic, located in the past of Andean cultures or in the present-day indigenous rituals (such as in the case of Alfredo Portillos)?

This article has been a first step towards answering these questions, by pointing out the differences in artistic approaches to the appropriation of the indigenous, as well as to national ideologies of *mestizaje* and *crisol de razas*. However, more comparative research is needed, particularly to include other countries, such as Mexico, Peru and Bolivia (for ideologies of *mestizaje*) and others, such as Uruguay and Chile, for the *crisol de razas* type of ideologies.

At the end we should note also once more the problematic nature of appropriation in relation to totalising notions of the nation. This is to say that explanations for appropriative choices will have to be sought by investigating the interplay between changing definitions and conceptualisations of cultural traditions and nationhood to individual identity claims. It is at the intersection of the two that the re-cognition of otherness operates which, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Schneider 2003b), is vital to the appropriation process itself.

As outlined in the introduction, the emphasis here has been on individual artists rather than on bounded groups. The artists under review are representative, not in a statistical sense, but rather for the explicitness of their position which can also be found among other intellectuals, such as writers and film-makers.<sup>13</sup>

It should have become clear that representations of the indigenous Other, in most cases, are not based on a claim of biological descent from indigenous people (except in the more complex sense of mixed descent, i.e. *mestizaje* as proposed by Viteri). Rather new Latin American identities are propagated, in which indigenous people are seen as the original ancestors of an independent and distinct continental history, and as its autochthonous representatives in the present. Whilst such constructions of Latin American identity include indigenous people as bearers of millennial symbolic and visual traditions, they do not further question the politics of representation involved (with the exception of Luis Celi). The essentialist undertones of such identity constructions apart (which in some ways mirror essentialist notions of the new indigenism in Latin America, cf. Blum 2001; Sieder 2002), we are also left asking in what way contemporary indigenous populations find themselves represented in these artworks.

Elsewhere, I have analysed instances of direct encounters between 'white' European descended artists in Argentina and indigenous people in Argentina – which here I can only refer to briefly. One example is that of the Argentine fashion photographer Gaby Herbstein, who in her calendar for the year 2000, entitled *Huellas*, featured twelve contemporary and extinct indigenous groups represented by white fashion models. Yet Herbstein still co-operated with advisers from indigenous communities for the calendar project (Schneider 2003a). The other case regards the feature film *El Camino* (2000), shot by director Javier Olivera partly in the Mapuche reservation of Ruka Choroï (Schneider in press). In both cases the politics of appropriation, participation and representation of indigenous people were complex, and whilst the artists made some efforts to allow indigenous voices to be heard, it was more their own artistic and commercial agenda which dominated.

As yet there is no similar data on the artworks and artists discussed in this article. For the most part indigenous groups, both in Argentina and Ecuador, live separately from the urban circuits of fine art galleries and museums, and more research is needed to investigate the complex and problematic relationships of their direct encounters.

---

13 For Argentina, see for example the film *El Camino* (2000) by Javier Olivera which I have discussed elsewhere (Schneider in press).

## References

### Interviews

- Celi, José Luis (1998): Interview with Arnd Schneider. Quito, July.  
 Eliçabe, Ximena (1999): Interview with Arnd Schneider. Buenos Aires, November.  
 Portillos, Alfredo (1993): Interview with Arnd Schneider. Buenos Aires, July.  
 — (1999): Interview with Arnd Schneider. Buenos Aires, November.  
 Viteri, Osvaldo (1998): Interview with Arnd Schneider. Quito, July.

### Archive and Pamphlet Material

- Glusberg, Jorge (1976): *Masks and Objects* (on a performance by Alfredo and Luis Portillos), press release by CAYC (Buenos Aires), Archer M. Huntington Gallery Files, University of Texas at Austin.

### Videos

- Eliçabe, Ximena (1996): *Mantos chamánicos*. Video of performance at Centro Cultural Rojas, Universidad de Buenos Aires (camera and video editor: Paula Coliqueo).  
 Portillos, Alfredo (1998 [1977]): *Espacio Ecuménico*. Video of performance at the Centro Cultural Recoleta de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires in 1994 (camera: Nicolás Portillos, video editor: Germán Trench).

### Books and Articles

- Ades, Dawn (ed.) (1989): *Art in Latin America*. London: Hayward Gallery (exhibition catalogue).  
 Albó, Xavier (1991): “El retorno del indio”. In: *Revista Andina* (Cusco), 9.2: 299-345.  
 — (2002): “Bolivia: From Indian and Campesino Leaders to Councillors and Parliamentary Deputies”. In: Sieder, Rachel (ed.): *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Baringstoke/London: ILAS/Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 74-102.  
 Appelbaum, Nancy P./Macpherson, Anne S./Roseblatt, Karin Alejandra (eds.) (2003): *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.  
 Bengoa, José (2000): *La emergencia indígena en América Latina*. Santiago: Ediciones SUR.  
 Blum, Volkmar (2001): *Hybridisierung von unten: Nation und Gesellschaft im mittleren Andenraum*. Hamburg: Lit.  
 Bravo, Alejandra (1999): *El arte plumaria entre el pasado y el presente*. Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro.  
 Brysk, Alison (2000): *Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.  
 Cadena, Marisol de la (2000): *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Cultures in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991*. Durham: Duke University Press.  
 Carvalho-Neto, Paulo de (ed.) (1989): *Arte popular del Ecuador: Areas Norte, Sur y Centro*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Quito: Abya-Yala.  
 Colloredo-Mansfeld, Rudi (1999): *The Native Leisure Class: Consumption and Cultural Creativity in the Andes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



- Cooke, Lynne (1991): "The Resurgence of the Night-Mind: Primitivist Revivals in Recent Art". In: Hiller, Susan (ed.): *The Myth of Primitivism*. London: Routledge, pp. 137-157.
- Gruzinski, Serge (1991): "Del barroco al neobarroco: las fuentes coloniales de los tiempos-modernos (el caso de México)/From the Baroque to the Neo-Baroque: The Colonial Sources of the Postmodern Era (The Mexican Case)". In: Debroise, Olivier/Sussman, Elisabeth/Teitelbaum, Matthew (eds./curats.): *El Corazón Sangrante/The Bleeding Heart* (exhibition catalogue). Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art/Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 62-89.
- (2000): "The Baroque Planet". In: Armstrong, Elizabeth/Zamudio-Taylor, Victor (eds./curats.): *Ultra Baroque: Aspects of Post Latin American Art*. San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art, pp. 111-125.
- (2001): *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492-2019)*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- (2002): *The Mestizo Mind*. London: Routledge.
- Gutiérrez, Natividad (1999): *Nationalist Myths and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1992): *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- (1996): *Transnational Connections*. London: Routledge.
- Harvey, David (1989): *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Herrera, María José (1993): "Arte y Antropología". In: *ARTINF* (Buenos Aires), 17.85: s.p.
- Kaplan, Flora S. (1993): "Mexican Museums in the Creation of a National Image in World Tourism". In: Nash, June C. (ed.): *Crafts in the World Market: The Impact of Global Exchange on Middle American Artisans*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 103-125.
- Knight, Alan (1990): "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940". In: Graham, Richard (ed.): *The Idea of Race in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio (1992): *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in Mexican National Space*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Oña, Lenín (1996): "Ecuador." In: Sullivan, Edward J. (ed.): *Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century*. London: Phaidon, pp. 191-200.
- Paternosto, César (1989): *Piedra Abstracta*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- (1996): *The Stone and the Thread: Andean Roots of Abstract Art*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Portillos, Alfredo (1976): *Homenagem ao "Pucará de Tilcara": Desenhos de Alfredo Portillos*. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado – Governo do Estado de São Paulo, Secretaria da Cultura, Ciência e Tecnologia (exhibition catalogue).
- (2000): *De la Muerte a la Vida: Retrospectiva*. Buenos Aires: Fundación Andreani (exhibition catalogue).
- Quijada, Mónica (2000): "Indígenas: Violencia, tierras y ciudadanía". In: Quijada, Mónica/Bernand, Carmen/Schneider, Arnd: *Homogeneidad y Nación. Con un estudio de caso: Argentina, Siglos XIX y XX*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, pp. 57-92.

- (2002): “Repensando la frontera sur argentina: concepto, contenido, continuidades y discontinuidades de una realidad espacial y étnica (Siglos XVII–XIX)”. In: *Revista de Indias* (Madrid), 62.224: 103-142.
- Quijada, Mónica/Bernand, Carmen/Schneider, Arnd (2000): *Homogeneidad y Nación. Con un estudio de caso: Argentina, siglos XIX y XX*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Radcliffe, Sarah/Westwood, Sally (1996): *Remaking the Nation: Place, Identity and Politics in Latin America*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Sarango Macas, Fernando (1995): “Los Saraguros”. In: Almeida Vinuesa, José (ed.): *Identidades indias en el Ecuador contemporáneo*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, pp. 339-369.
- Schneider, Arnd (1993): “The Art Diviners”. In: *Anthropology Today* (Oxford/New York), 9.1: 3-9.
- (1996): “Uneasy Relationships: Contemporary Artists and Anthropology”. In: *Journal of Material Culture* (London), 1.2: 183-210.
- (1998): “L’alterité dans l’Argentine moderne”. In: *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* (Paris), 105: 241-260.
- (1999): “Appropriation, Contemporary Arts and Globalisation: Some Issues for Future Research”. In: *EthnoScripts* (Hamburg), 1.1: 81-84.
- (2000a): “Sites of Amnesia, Non-Sites of Memory: Identity and Other in the Work of Four Uruguayan Artists”. In: Coles, Alex (ed.): *Siting Ethnography*. London: Blackdog Publications.
- (2000b): *Futures Lost: Nostalgia and Identity among Italian Immigrants in Argentina*. Berne/New York: Peter Lang.
- (2003a): “Fashioning Indians or Beautiful Savages: The Case of Gaby Herstein’s *Huellas – 2000*”. In: *EthnoScripts* (Hamburg), 5.2: 2-33.
- (2003b): “On ‘Appropriation’: a Reappraisal of the Concept and its Application in Global Art Practices”. In: *Social Anthropology* (Cambridge), 11.2: 75-89.
- (in press): “Setting up Roots, or the Anthropologist on the Set: Observations on the Shooting of a Cinema Movie in a Mapuche Reservation, Argentina”. In: Grimshaw, Anna/Ravetz, Amanda (eds.): *Visualizing Anthropology*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Sieder, Rachel (2002): “Introduction”. In: Sieder, Rachel (ed.): *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Baringstoke/London: ILAS/Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 1-23.
- Sondereguer, César (1997): *Estética Amerindia*. Buenos Aires: eme.
- Stavenhagen, Rodolfo (2002): “Indigenous People and the State in Latin America: An Ongoing Debate”. In: Sieder, Rachel (ed.): *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Baringstoke/London: ILAS/Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 24-44.
- Stutzman, Ronald (1981): “El Mestizaje: An All-Inclusive Ideology of Exclusion”. In: Whitten Jr., Norman E. (ed.): *Cultural Transformations and Ethnicity in Ecuador*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 45-94.
- Urban, Greg/Sherzer, Joel (1991): *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- Van Cott, Donna Lee (2002): "Constitutional Reform in the Andes: Redefining Indigenous-State Relations." In: Sieder, Rachel (ed.): *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Baringstoke/London: ILAS/Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 45-73.
- Wade, Peter (2003): "Race and Nation in Latin America: An Anthropological View". In: Appelbaum, Nancy P./Macpherson, Anne S./Roseblatt, Karin Alejandra (eds.): *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 263-281.
- Williamson, Edwin (1992): *The Penguin History of Latin America*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.